

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MARCH 5, 1993

Mr. Shigemoto Kajihara
Deputy Director
Office of Marine Pollution Control
& Waste Management
Environment Agency
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100, Japan

Dear Mr. Kajihara:

This letter is in response to your February 3, 1993 correspondence requesting information on the waste management practices in the United States for automobiles and auto shredder residue (ASR) generated from automobile shredding.

In general, municipal solid waste (MSW) in the United States is regulated by State environmental agencies and not the Federal government. States that are in a much better position to assess their own needs and abilities to manage MSW and identify the appropriate level and types of waste management options (e.g., recycling, landfilling, incineration, etc.) available on a statewide basis. Some States have banned the disposal of white goods (e.g., appliances) and/or automobiles in landfills within their state primarily as an effort to conserve landfill capacity and promote recycling of these products. Others have imposed a consumer surcharge on these, and other hard-to-dispose of goods to help fund recycling programs. These funds may be used by State agencies to set up recycling programs or used as a financial incentive to offer private sector entities who engage in recycling programs.

Your points concerning the management of auto shredder residue (ASR) are well taken. It is estimated that as much as three million short tons of shredder residue are generated annually in the U.S., the result of shredding nearly 10 million automobiles and as many as 20 million appliances. I have enclosed a copy of a report prepared, in-part, by my office which shows the results of a pilot study we conducted on ASR at seven shredder operations in the U.S. The data show that shredder residue has the potential to exhibit the characteristics of a hazardous waste and may also contain PCB concentrations above regulatory levels of concern.

Most of the shredder residue in this country is managed in municipal or privately owned nonhazardous waste landfills. Based on the aforementioned data from our study, ASR managed in poorly designed landfills or used as fill material in environmentally sensitive areas (such as wetlands), could be cause for concern. Recently, our office issued new Subtitle D (nonhazardous) waste landfill criteria which are meant to ensure that nonhazardous waste landfills will be managed in a manner which protects human health and the environment. I have enclosed a copy of these criteria for your information. The requirements in these criteria are similar to existing criteria we have for hazardous waste landfills and should greatly improve the protectiveness of these disposal units. We believe that ASR disposed in landfills meeting our new criteria would be protective of human health and the environment.

Federal hazardous waste regulations (which are usually adopted and enforced by State regulatory agencies) require generators to determine whether their solid waste, such as shredder residue, is hazardous before disposal. This determination can be made based on representative sampling and analyses of the waste or based on the generator's general knowledge of the waste. If the waste is determined to be hazardous it must be managed as a Subtitle C waste and in compliance with hazardous waste management regulations. If the waste is determined to be nonhazardous then it must be managed pursuant to the regulations for nonhazardous or Subtitle D wastes. Again, each State may be authorized to enforce the Federal regulations if the regulations are adopted under State law. I have enclosed a copy of our Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) which detail the Federal requirements pertaining to managing both hazardous and nonhazardous wastes (see 40 CFR Parts 260-265).

We have anecdotal information which suggests that many shredder facilities in the past may have failed to adequately sample and analyze their residue before disposal and may have been unaware that their waste could be hazardous. Information also suggests that municipal landfill operators are increasingly asking for sampling and analytical data prior to accepting ASR.

The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) is currently conducting a study to evaluate the economic impacts of ASR waste management. More information on ISRI's study is available by contacting:

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1627 K Street, NW
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I hope this information is helpful to you and wish you the best in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Sylvia K. Lowrance
Director

FaxBack # 11971

Office of Solid Waste